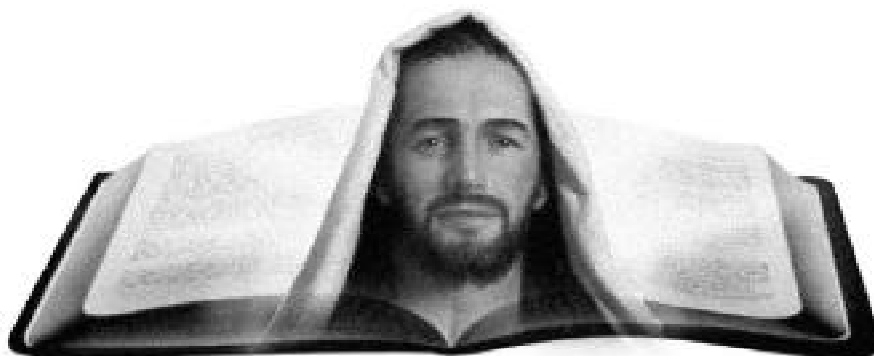


# Jesus Is the Best



SABBATH—JANUARY 3

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** John 1:1-18.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “The Word [Jesus] became flesh [human] and made his [Jesus]’ dwelling [home] among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only [Jesus], who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, NIV).

**IMPORTANT THOUGHT:** At the beginning of his book, John describes Jesus as the Word who was God from eternity.<sup>1</sup> But Jesus became flesh. He alone is worthy of our worship.

**JESUS IS THE BEST EXAMPLE OF GOD.** John 1:1-18 serves as an introduction to the story of Jesus. John 1:1-18 tells a wonderful story. The King of the universe, the Creator, became a human. Jesus walked this earth. He became sweaty, tired, and hungry. But Jesus Himself was one with God before the world began. Jesus became part of the human race and had human limitations. But he was the One who created the human race and the world where humans live. The Creator came to serve the creation. He even would die for all humans. The introduction to John interprets everything that happens in the rest of the book with eternity in mind.

The Creator Himself came down and walked among us. He spoke our language. He showed us what God is like. Through the book of John, we escape from a narrow world of human limitations into the great universe under God's perfect control. Only God can help us better understand how Jesus became human.

\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 10.

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<sup>1</sup>eternity—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

## SUNDAY—JANUARY 4

**THE WORD AS ETERNAL<sup>2</sup> GOD  
(John 1:1, 2).**

The introduction to the book of John (John 1:1-18) is a style of Hebrew poetry. This style often uses parallel<sup>3</sup> words and ideas. The simple but beautiful language of John 1:1-18 is a perfect addition to the ideas given in these verses.

**How far back in time does “the Word [Jesus]” go? John 1:1. What does “in the beginning” mean? Why would John want to join “the Lord” and “in the beginning” together? Read also John 1:3.**

The Greeks of John’s day probably would have understood what “the Word” meant, even though they had never heard of Jesus. For many hundreds of years, the Greeks knew that a God called “the Word” (*logos* in Greek) was the Creator and Sustainer<sup>4</sup> of the universe. They knew that “the Word” was responsible for a person’s ability to reason and think. They knew that “the Word” also worked with God and Creation. In using the word *logos* for Jesus, John was talking to the Greeks in a way they could understand.

**What kind of relationship did the Word have with the Father? John 1:1, 2, 18.**



Jesus teaches us about God, because Jesus is the same as God.

**Is the Word fully God or in some kind of “lower” position? John 1:1.**

The first words of John’s book join “in the beginning” (from the Creation story of Genesis 1:1) with a verb<sup>5</sup> that suggests continuing life in past time. In the very beginning when Creation began, the Word was already alive. In other words, the Word is eternal.

Jesus was not created by the Father. From eternity, Jesus, the Word, was separate from the Father (called “God” in John 1:1 but “Father” in John 1:18). But He was in no way lower than the Father. “What God was, the Word was” is the correct translation of The New English Bible. The close relationship between the Word and the Father is a closeness of equals.

<sup>2</sup>eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

<sup>3</sup>parallel—to be almost the same.

<sup>4</sup>sustainer—something or someone who keeps something or someone alive. Jesus keeps us alive through His power.

<sup>5</sup>verb—a word that shows action.

## MONDAY—JANUARY 5

**CREATOR AND SUSTAINER<sup>6</sup>**  
(John 1:3-5).

**How does John make it clear that the eternal Word (Jesus) was not a created person? John 1:3.**

John 1:3 announces that everyone and everything in all creation was made by “the Word.” He is the Source<sup>7</sup> of everything created. If He made everything, then He Himself was not created. Before any creation took place, the Word was already living (John 1:1).

This teaching may not seem much to nonbelievers. But this teaching is very important to Christians. The Person (Jesus) who died on the cross was not just another part of God’s creation, like the sun, the moon, or the angels. If Jesus were just another part of God’s creation, His sacrifice would have been worth nothing. But because Jesus is our Creator, His sacrifice is of great value.

We are so important to God that His Son, Jesus, died to save us. Jesus dying to save us is the truest and strongest reason for self-worth.

**How do Hebrews 1:2 and Colossians 1:16, 17 say what John is saying about Jesus’ work as our Creator?**



**We know we are special, because Jesus died to save us.**

**“‘His (Jesus’) name shall be called Immanuel, meaning God with us.’ We see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God ‘in the face of Jesus.’ From the days of eternity, Jesus Christ was one with the Father. He was ‘the image (copy) of God.’ He was the image of God’s greatness and kingly power. ‘He was the outshining of His glory.’ It was to show God’s glory that Jesus came to our world. To this sin-darkened earth, He came to show the light of God’s love. He came to be ‘God with us.’ So prophecy said of Jesus, ‘His name shall be called Immanuel.’ ”**  
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup>sustainer—something or someone who keeps something or someone alive. Jesus keeps us alive through His power.

<sup>7</sup>source—where something comes from. All things come from Jesus.

**Think about what Jesus as fully God means to us. What does it mean that God Himself died for our sins?**

## TUESDAY—JANUARY 6

### REJECTION<sup>8</sup> AND RECEPTION<sup>9</sup> (John 1:4-13).

**What other work does the Word (Jesus) do? John 1:4, 5.**

At Creation, the Word was the Source of physical light. He is the One who uses light (the rays of the sun) to grow plants and support physical life on earth. But John is talking about more than physical light and life. He is talking about spiritual light.

**Read John 1:10. Write in your own words what this verse means.**

Without the Word, there would be no rain, no sunshine, no air, no life. The surprise is that when the Creator and Sustainer was on earth as a human, people did not recognize Him as their Creator and Sustainer. Even His “very own” people refused to accept Him! John 1:4, 5, 10, shows us that the actions of so many people toward Jesus in the book of John are foolish and sad. This includes His disciples (John 12:16; John 14:6-9).

**But John’s introduction (John 1:1-18) is not at all dark. On what basis is it possible to become children of God? John 1:12, 13?**

In John 1:12, the one who “received” (a point in past time) Him (Jesus) and who “believes” (continuous<sup>10</sup> action) in His name receives the right to become a child of God. First we must accept Jesus as our Savior. Then we must believe in Him every day. There is no “once saved always saved” here. Becoming a child of God has a beginning. Being a child of God continues as long as a Christian lives.

This “new birth” (becoming God’s child) does not happen because of anything we do. It is a miracle, the same as Creation was a miracle. Creation must be sustained<sup>11</sup> by the continual<sup>12</sup> miracle of the Word’s watchcare (John 1:4, 5). In the same way, our relationship with Jesus must be sustained (John 1:12, 13).

**In John 1:12, John says that people who receive Jesus become sons and daughters of God. Why do some people receive Him and other people do not? How do the freedom and right to choose help us with the answer? How does free choice help us to continue our spiritual life?**

<sup>8</sup>rejection—not to accept something.

<sup>9</sup>reception—to accept something.

<sup>10</sup>continuous—always happening.

<sup>11</sup>sustained—kept alive.

<sup>12</sup>continual—always happening.



Becoming a child of God is a miracle.

WEDNESDAY—JANUARY 7

**THE HUMANITY<sup>13</sup> OF JESUS**  
(John 1:1, 2, 14).

**Contrast<sup>14</sup> John 1:1, 2 with John 1:14. John 1:1-5 focuses on Jesus being with the Father from the beginning. But John 1:14 talks about Jesus**

**as One who walked on earth as a human. John 1:1, 2, 14 is an interesting puzzle. A Jew with human weaknesses, living at a chosen time in history, turns out to be the Creator of the universe!**

The language in John 1:1, 2, 14 is simple but deep. In John 1:1, the Word (Jesus) “was.” The Greek verb tense suggests continuous past life. Jesus *always* “was.” But John 1:14 tells us that at a point in time the Word “became” flesh. The word translated “became” is the same as the word translated “made” in John 1:3. When the Word became flesh, it was an act of creation. Something was added to Jesus’ eternal nature. Jesus “was” God. But Jesus also “became” flesh. The Word went from being “with God” to being “with us.” The entire book of John shows Jesus’ human form while He was here on earth. We struggle here to explain simple truth. This truth is so deep that “the whole world would not have room for the book” that could be written about it (John 21:25, NIV). In simple language John has described fully the Word’s nature

Eternal (John 1:1)	Earthly (John 1:14)
“was”	“became”
“with God”	“among us”
“was God”	“became flesh [human]”

<sup>13</sup>humanity—being a person.

<sup>14</sup>contrast—show how things are different.

as God and as human. He is the God-Man. He is from heaven. But He is of earth. He always was. But He also became. He was eternal. But He also has a created life as a human.

Because He is fully God, Jesus could show what God *really* is. But because He became fully human, Jesus can show who God is at a level we can understand and follow. “ ‘Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father’ ” (John 14:9, NIV). In the book of John, this hard-to-understand but glorious truth is shown in the introduction. This truth also touches our hearts through the Holy Spirit (John 16:13-15).

**If possible, get some facts on the size of the universe. After reading those facts, think about the verses and lesson for today. How does this help you begin to understand the great love God has for us?**

## THURSDAY—JANUARY 8

### THE GREATEST REVELATION (EXAMPLE) (John 1:14-18).

**What did the Word (Jesus) do in order that people on earth might see His glory? John 1:14.**

The words “lived among us” (TEV) translate the Greek word for “pitch one’s tent.” This reminds us of the sanctuary in the wilderness (Exodus 25:8, 9). The glory of Jesus that the disciples saw helps us remember the glory of God’s presence in that sanctuary (Exodus

40:34, 35). Things become even more interesting when we discover that in Hebrew the words “to dwell [live]” (*shachan*) and the word for God’s glory in the sanctuary (*shechinah*) come from the same root word.

The Old Testament sanctuary continues to teach us about God. But when the Word became flesh, the Old Testament sanctuary was shadowed by an even greater teacher. Jesus is a better example of God than even the sanctuary. Why? In Jesus, God dwelt (lived) directly with us in human body.



**What did John the Baptist have to say about the Word? John 1:15. What was John speaking about when he said that Jesus came “before” him? Read Luke 1.**

**What point is John making as he contrasts Jesus and Moses in John 1:17, 18?**

In Jesus’ day, the two greatest persons were John the Baptist and Moses. Many people respected John as a prophet. Moses led Israel out of slavery

in Egypt, and he gave them God's law.

But John makes clear that Jesus is not just a common man. Jesus is greater than the greatest man known to the people of the time. He was the best, because He was God, who became human. Through the human Jesus, people could learn what God is like.

Moses had a great opportunity to see God (Exodus 33:19-23). But God just let Moses see Him only shortly and from the back. Jesus was different. He came to earth as one who had always been "at the Father's side." The Greek word suggests a close working relationship with God.

**What does Jesus becoming human say to us about pride? Why is human pride such a terrible sin?**

#### FRIDAY—JANUARY 9

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** "Jesus was God in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity. He was God over all, blessed forevermore.

"Jesus, the Son of God, lived from eternity, a separate person, but still one with the Father."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, April 5, 1906.

"In Jesus is life, original, coming from no one."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 530.

"The only way fallen people could be brought back to God was through

the gift of His Son, who volunteered to be their equal while still being God. So highly honored as God, Jesus accepted human nature that He might bring rebellious people back to God."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, November 8, 1892.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. John began his book with thoughts about Creation, and even before Creation. But Matthew, Mark, and Luke began their books with Jesus' birth or His adult life. Why?
2. John used sanctuary symbols to point to Jesus (John 1:14). The earthly sanctuary services ended after Jesus' death. But how does the sanctuary help us understand what Jesus did for us on earth as a man and what He does for us now as our High Priest in heaven?
3. How would you answer someone who refuses to accept that Jesus is God and that He is eternal?

**SUMMARY:** John 1:1-18 tells us that the King of the universe, the eternal Creator, chose to become a human. With simple but deep words. John shows that great difference between Jesus as God and Jesus as Man. Jesus combines everything we need to become God's children. The rest of the book of John will show how we can become God's children.